

Winner by a nose!

Pencilled in for a one-off performance, Mr Squiggle outlasts everyone else on TV

TELEVISION'S longest running-personality, Mr Squiggle, celebrates his 30th birthday this year and no one is more surprised at the phenomenal success of the character than his creator, Norman Hetherington.

"If I knew back in 1959 that he would still be going now I don't know if I'd have agreed to create him," Norman says with a laugh.

"But I think his success has a lot to do with the fact that he's different from the other children's characters on TV."

Norman created Mr Squiggle in 1959 for a series of one-off children's shows for the ABC which eventually became a full-time show.

He is the puppeteer and the voice behind all the characters on the show and his wife Margaret writes the scripts.

"When we first started Squiggle, we would get all the neighborhood children and test out ideas on them," Margaret says.



"And when our children were younger, we would sit them down and bounce ideas off them — Squiggle is really like one of the family."

Norman, who was a political cartoonist on the Bulletin magazine, has always had an interest in puppets.

"The idea came to combine the two interests and I came up with a puppet that could draw," he says.

The cast was extended in 1962 with Steamshovel and in 1977, Gus the Snail.

ABOVE: Norman Hetherington and Mr Squiggle... no sign of retirement. BELOW: Margaret Hetherington and "one of the family".

"I got the idea for Steamshovel, because, at the time, there was a steam shovel in our streets driving us crazy," Norm says.

Even after 30 years, there is no sign of Mr Squiggles retiring.

"As long as it continues to be fun we'll keep doing it," says Norman.